

The Profession of Social Work: At a Glance

This sheet will provide you with important information about the profession of social work. Included are the following:

- The Mission of Social Work
- Social Work Values
- Core Competencies as Identified by CSWE
- Code of Ethics: Principles and Standards
- Ethical Decision-Making Process (Reamer, 2002)

I. The Mission of Social Work

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty.

A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living

II. Social Work Values

The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective.

- Service
- Social justice
- Dignity and worth of the person
- Importance of human relationships
- Integrity
- Competence

This constellation of core values reflects what is unique to the social work profession. Core values, and the principles that flow from them, must be balanced within the context and complexity of the human experience.

III. Competencies as Identified by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)

Core Competency	Description
1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Advocate for client access to services of social work▪ Practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development▪ Attend to professional roles and boundaries▪ Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication▪ Engage in career-long learning, and▪ Use supervision and consultation

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<p>2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognize and manage personal values in a way that allow professional values to guide practice ▪ Make ethical decisions by applying standards of the NASW Code of Ethics and, as applicable, of the International Federation of Social Workers/International Association of School Social Work Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles, and ▪ Tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflict, and ▪ Apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions
<p>3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom, ▪ Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation, and ▪ Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues
<p>4. Engage diversity and difference in practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power ▪ Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups ▪ Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experience, and ▪ View themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants
<p>5. Advance human rights and social and economic justice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination ▪ Advocate for human rights and social and economic justice, and ▪ Engage in practice that advance social and economic justice
<p>6. Engage in research-informed practice and practiced-informed research.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry, and ▪ Use research evidence to inform practice
<p>7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessments, interventions, and evaluation, and ▪ Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment

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<p>8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being, and ▪ Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action
<p>9. Respond to the contexts that shape practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing location, populations, scientific, and technological developments, and emerging society trends to provide relevant services, and ▪ Provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services
<p>10. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.</p>	<p>Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Substantially and effectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities ▪ Use empathy and other interpersonal skills, and ▪ Develop a mutually agreed-on focus of work and desired outcomes <p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collect, organize, and interpret client data, ▪ Assess client strengths and limitations, ▪ Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives, and ▪ Select appropriate intervention strategies <p>Intervention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initiate action to achieve organizational goals ▪ Implement prevention interventions that enhance client capacities, ▪ Help client resolve problems, and ▪ Negotiate, mediate, and advocate for clients, and facilitate transitions and endings <p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social workers clinically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions

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III. Competencies as Identified by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)

a) Ethical Principles

The following broad ethical principles are based on social work's core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. These principles set forth ideals to which all social workers should aspire.

Value: Service

Ethical Principle: Social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems. Social workers elevate service to others above self-interest. Social workers draw on their knowledge, values, and skills to help people in need and to address social problems. Social workers are encouraged to volunteer some portion of their professional skills with no expectation of significant financial return (pro bono service).

Value: Social Justice

Ethical Principle: Social workers challenge social injustice. Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people.

Value: Dignity and Worth of the Person

Ethical Principle: Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person. Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers promote clients' socially responsible self-determination. Social workers seek to enhance clients' capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs. Social workers are cognizant of their dual responsibility to clients' interests and the broader society's interests in a socially responsible manner consistent with the values, ethical principles, and ethical standards of the profession.

Value: Importance of Human Relationships

Ethical Principle: Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships. Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change. Social workers engage people as partners in the helping process. Social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities.

Value: Integrity

Ethical Principle: Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner. Social workers are continually aware of the profession's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards and practice in a manner consistent with them. Social workers act honestly and responsibly and promote ethical practices on the part of the organizations with which they are affiliated.

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Value: **Competence**

Ethical Principle: Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise. Social workers continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills and to apply them in practice. Social workers should aspire to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.

b) Ethical Standards

<p>I Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to Clients:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commitment to clients 2. Self-determination 3. Informed consent 4. Competence 5. Cultural competence and social divert 6. Conflicts of interest 7. Privacy and confidentiality 8. Access to research 9. Sexual relationships 10. Physical contact 11. Sexual harassment 12. Derogatory language 13. Payment for services 14. Clients who lack decision-making capacity 15. Interruption of services 16. Termination of services 	<p>II Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commitment to clients 2. Self-determination 3. Respect 4. Confidentiality 5. Interdisciplinary collaboration 6. Disputes involving colleagues 7. Consultation 8. Referral to services 9. Sexual relationships 10. Sexual harassment 11. Impairment of colleagues 12. Incompetence of colleagues 13. Unethical conduct of colleagues
<p>III Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities in Practice Settings</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervision and consolation 2. Education and training 3. Performance evaluation 4. Client records 5. Billing 6. Client transfer 7. Administration 8. Continuing education and staff development 9. Commitment to employers 10. Labor management disputes 	<p>IV Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities as Professionals</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Competence 2. Discrimination 3. Private conduct 4. Dishonesty, fraud, and deception 5. Impairment 6. Misrepresentation 7. Solicitation 8. Acknowledging credit
<p>V Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Profession</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrity of the profession 2. Evaluation and research 	<p>IV Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social welfare 2. Public participation 3. Public emergencies 4. Social and political action

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IV. Ethical Decision-Making Process (Reamer, 2002)

- 1. Identify the ethical issues**, including the social work values and ethics that conflict.
- 2. Identify the individuals, groups, and organizations** that are likely to be affected by the ethical decision.
- 3. Tentatively identify all possible courses of action** and the participants involved in each, along with possible benefits and risks for each.
- 4. Thoroughly examine** the reasons in favor of and opposed to each possible course of action, considering relevant (a) ethical theories, principles, and guidelines; (b) codes of ethics and legal principles; (c) social work practice theory and principles; and (d) personal values (including religious, cultural, and ethnic values and political ideology).
- 5. Consult with colleagues and appropriate experts** (such as agency staff, supervisors, agency administrators, attorneys, ethics scholars, and ethics committees).
- 6. Make the decision and document** the decision-making process.
- 7. Monitor, evaluate, and document** the decision.